

February 11, 2004

The Honorable Carl R. Johnson, Chair
Senate Environment Committee
Room 104
Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 487, relative to lead sinkers

Dear Senator Johnson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 487, relative to lead sinkers. The department supports this bill as amended, which would prohibit the use of small lead sinkers and jigs on the state's freshwaters and which would also prohibit the sale of small lead sinkers and jigs.

As you know, the Department of Environmental Services strongly supported HB 1196 when it was introduced and passed in 1998. HB 1196 banned the use of lead sinkers in any fresh water pond or lake in the state. The General Court is to be commended for adopting that legislation which made New Hampshire one of the first states in the country to address this issue. Since that time, however, the State's loon population has continued to suffer losses which can be directly attributed to poisoning resulting from the ingestion of lead sinkers. Given this unfortunate trend, it appears that further legislative action is appropriate to eliminate small lead sinkers and jigs from being introduced into the state's lakes and rivers.

A ban on the sale of small lead sinkers and jigs, as defined in the amendment to the bill, which would take effect in 2005, is a proper next step. Lead is a toxic metal and non-lead alternative sinkers and jigs have been available from retailers in the state for several years. Any opportunity to prevent the release of this toxin into our environment is something which the State of New Hampshire should pursue.

The Department would be pleased to work with the Department of Fish and Game, the Loon Preservation Committee, and other groups to develop and implement programs regarding this legislation.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment, and please call me at 271-3503 or Jacquie Colburn at 271-2959 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely yours,

Michael P. Nolin
Commissioner